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## Military-Media Detente

I spent two whole days recently being seduced, a delightful experience and one available much too infrequently to gents who are getting a little long in the tooth, a little broad in the beam and a little shiny on top.

The enterprise was originated by, of all people, the U.S. Navy, an institution I had always supposed, in these matters, to favor methods more direct.

The occasion was the Second Military-Media Conference, held at the Naval War College in Newport, R.I.

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The college, like its Army equivalent here in Washington, is a service school for officers in mid-career, designed to help them explore some of the broader aspects of their profession, including its relations to the larger society, to history, to international concerns.

Some three dozen newspaper and broadcast people were brought in. Eight of us gave talks to the student body and guests and all of us presided at seminars at which we were generally outnumbered by about 20 to 1. We were also together for breakfast, lunch and dinner and on both nights a lot of military-media conferring went on informally in various Newport and Jamestown bars and private houses. It was something close to total immersion.

The man who thought up the conference, president of the college, Vice Adm. Stansfield Turner, placed its proceedings off the record to make for greater freedom of exchange and that direction will be honored in what follows, but some of the peripheral aspects of the conference ought to be

discussed, partly because, as at so many large gatherings of purpose, the things that happened around the edges were as important as those in the center.

Adm. Turner pulled no punches at all in exposing his students to members of the media often thought, perhaps, to be particularly hostile to the military. Reporters, columnists and authors included Anthony Lewis, David Halberstam and Stewart Loory and others in that general category.

Besides a good deal of bickering in the seminars over the meaning of the First Amendment versus the security of the country, there was only one highly emotional moment. That came in the auditorium at the conclusion of Halberstam's talk. He had said a lot of the things that a lot of the press gang present had said themselves, but he said them with great authority. Many of his observations, without doubt, could be considered hostile to the military, especially the military as it functioned in Vietnam.

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He also said them with the intensity of a man who had been wounded by the things he was talking about and still suffered from the wound. When he finished, the overwhelmingly military audience gave Halberstam a standing ovation, the only one accorded anyone in the two days.

Even in the theater, one can only guess at the reasons for such response, but at Newport it seemed to me that the professional military audience was responding to a man who had lived their life, felt deeply his criticisms and was standing there bleeding, figuratively, from wounds not at all dis-

similar to wounds they had borne themselves.

People who were there said last year's conference was a disaster, with the participants departing in mutual hostility even deeper than that in which they arrived.

If so, the tide has turned. This year's was no love feast, but some degree of mutual respect and personal liking emerged. For the press, I think, the turning point was in the reception accorded Halberstam.

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After that, the "mad bombers" and the "Commie writers" got on much better. The bombers were not only decent human beings — surprise, surprise — who had followed their orders from civil authority exactly as they are supposed to do, but a large number of them were as appalled at our war in Vietnam as were those of us who stayed home and went into shock watching television.

It should have been evident to the Bundys and McNamaras when they were cranking it all up, but it is now beyond dispute, agreed upon by such opponents as the military and the media, that there can be no such thing as a surreptitious war.

The most important aspect of the conference, however, is that it took place at all. President Nixon unfortunately has reduced his old slogan, "Bring us together again," to the status of a sour joke, but it remains true that this country has been shattered by Vietnam and a lot of bringing together remains to be done.

In a small but important area, Adm. Turner deserves great credit for making a start.